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ORDINATIONS ENHANCE NIOBRARA CONVOCAATION

by Mary Hobbs

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PARMELEE, S.D. -- Mighty rushing "winds" began and ended the 108th annual Niobrara Convocation in late June.

The first, a violent storm, roared through the campground around Holy Innocents' Church here just as people were arriving and setting up tents. The storm chased them into the church basement and sent six new latrines tumbling end over end across the prairie.

The second "wind" was the blessing of the final Sunday morning Eucharist: six Indian men were ordained and a thousand people assented joyfully to the new leadership raised up in their midst. The streams of communicants passing by the altar prompted a worshipper to mutter, "Who says the Church is dying?"


The Niobrara Convocation brings together representatives of the more than 90 South Dakota churches having a significant Indian membership, plus those of congregations in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

The Convocation functions as a huge family get-together and as the voice of the Indian people within the Diocese. One-half of the membership of the Church here is native American, overwhelmingly of the Sioux nation.

Ordained Sunday were: the Rev. Robert Two Bulls to the priesthood; and, to the diaconate, George Medicine Eagle, Robert Mesteth, Charles Moose, Leonard American Horse, and Ben Tyon.

George Medicine Eagle comes from Holy Spirit, Ideal, attached to the Rosebud Mission; all the rest minister on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

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This brings to 18 the number of Indians ordained by the Rt. Rev. Walter Jones in his ten years as Bishop. All six of these men studied under the guidance of the Dakota Leadership Program, which provides and coordinates extension studies in centers in North and South Dakota. There are 51 more diocesan people, white and Indian, preparing for the ordained ministry.

Lay persons had their day at Convocation too: Joseph Kills Crow (Standing Rock Mission) and Guilford Noisy Hawk (Pine Ridge) were commissioned captains in the Church Army Society.

Emily Artichoker was given a gold Niobrara Cross for herself and posthumously for her husband John in recognition and thanksgiving for more than twenty-five years running Hare Home for Boys, Mission, South Dakota. Gold crosses are awarded by the women of the the Niobrara Deanery to leaders giving at least two decades of their lives to service in the deanery.

A lot of lay effort was also represented by the record-breaking \$17,550 Convocation offering, presented at the women's and men's meetings and at the Sunday Eucharist.

Notable in the business accomplished was a resolution to be sent to the Diocesan Convention in October urgently requesting a second bishop for the diocese, to be of Native American ancestry.

In 1981, Niobrara Convocation will go ecumenical. The annual meetings of the Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterian Indian jurisdictions will be held with the Episcopalians at St. Mary's, Sisseton Mission.

Somewhere, cooks are being lined up to feed 5,000 people for three days. Money is being raised to buy the necessary loaves and fishes.

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